DD/S 66-3122

FILE *O&M 2-2(EXP)*

1 6 JUN 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Personnel

Bob:

Attached are copies of three requests for computer services received from _____ during the past week or ten days. I have sent them forward to OCS to be added to the queue because I understand that working level agreement has been reached between _____ people and _____ or someone else in his shop. There are a few points about them, however, which cause me to wonder whether these may not be examples of the kinds of things that might be deferred or cancelled.

Request Number 882, for example, is intended to enter into the record some limited amount of data about dependents which will be captured as a part of the information employees will be asked to supply when they complete the forms to be circulated beginning with the fitness report cycle next fall or winter. I believe it is anticipated that the file will be updated annually thereafter by subsequent submissions during the annual fitness reporting cycle. I think we all recognize the need to have retrievable information about the numbers and locations of our dependents particularly at times when emergency evacuation is required. However, annual reporting of changes in dependency status leaves about 10 to 11 months a year when changes can occur without being reported and we will have no greater assurance that our records are any more current and accurate after we start this system than we are now. Until we have a systematic way of collecting current information about changes in dependency status, I wonder whether it is worth the trouble to further encumber the qualifications file with additional data which cannot help but be unreliable and I can see no reason for wanting to retrieve unreliable information. If it is necessary to do something about this immediately, I should think we might do better to develop a system for collecting information about changes in dependency status as they occur so that the record we build will be reliable. On the other hand, I wonder if this might not be something we could defer for the development of our new system.

The work orders requesting changes to the language training record raise some questions similar to those about dependency status as well as some others. Here again we seem to be patching a computer program

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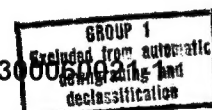
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to compensate for a failure in the basic system. We are revising the computer program to retain claimed language proficiency because we are unable to guarantee the testing program. We can't rely on the testing program because people are disclaiming language proficiency rather than submit to the inconvenience or embarrassment of taking a test. We are, in a sense, invalidating the computer record by retaining questionable information rather than correcting the basic fault in the system. One of our objectives is to validate the language file, yet the action we are taking seems destined to further becloud the issue.

Another thing that concerns me is that the language file itself is only one small part of the problem of systematizing the overall language program. The approved language policy requires that Deputy Directors state their foreign language requirements according to position, language, and level of proficiency; that they update them at least annually; and that they furnish a consolidated statement of current language requirements to the Director of Training in a suitable format. As far as I have been able to determine, we do not know yet whether or how claimed or tested language proficiencies will be used in relation to the as yet undeveloped file of requirements. We have no way of knowing, therefore, whether or to what extent the language proficiency file will serve the total purpose of the language program. The approved language program also requires periodic updating of the language proficiency file as well as the proficiency requirements file yet, as far as I have been able to determine, we have not thought through the means by which these updatings are intended to be accomplished. In short, the actions we propose seem to be totally oriented toward the computer and what it can be used to do toward the satisfaction of a fragmented group of record keeping procedures without having given very much thought to the language program as a system which requires some sort of cohesive and coherent management. Again, it doesn't seem that we have very much to gain and possibly a great deal to lose, in terms of time and effort spent, by taking a piece-meal approach apparently oriented principally about patching computer programs.

As I indicated in the opening paragraph, I have sent these work orders to the Office of Computer Services even though I feel I should recommend against proceeding in this way, and this brings me to another point I think we should consider in terms of actions taken to modify on-going programs.

In both of these cases, the dependency status and the language testing, there has been some preliminary working level collaboration and discussion between people in the Office of Personnel and the Office of Computer Services. In one case, some of the work has already been done in that data available has been converted to machine language. I have no way of knowing whether

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or not some of the computer programming may already have been done. In effect, therefore, both components are already committed to an action before we know whether or not it is something we really have to do now. While I would not want to take any action which would undermine or destroy the highly satisfactory working relationships which exist between the Support Offices and the Office of Computer Services, it seems to me we do need to consider some means by which requirements for computer services can be surfaced through the formal organization before we become fully committed by the informal organization.

I would like to suggest that you cancel the work order calling for recording dependency status in the qualifications file, and the two work orders relating to the language proficiency records, preferably until they can be handled as requirements in the new systems we are developing. If, for some reason, we can't tolerate that time frame, I think we should defer them at least until procedures can be developed to ensure the reliability of the data to be recorded in the computer files.

As a separate but related matter, I would appreciate your considering what, if anything, we can do to avoid having commitments and agreements reached at the working level before they reach the point of becoming work orders. Under the present circumstances, if I have a question that turns out to be valid it tends to undo some amount of work that has already been done.

Could I have your reactions, please.

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Special Assistant to the
Deputy Director for Support

SA-DD/S:RHW:dek (16 June 66)
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